

Domestic Violence Claims 65 Lives in 2005

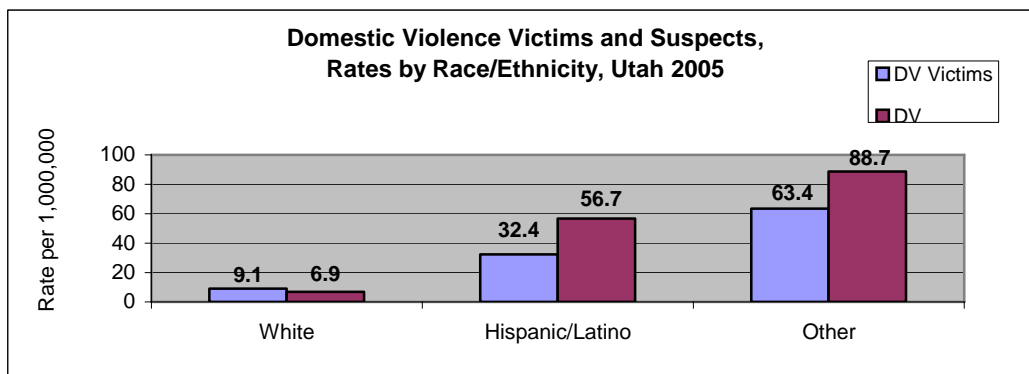
New Utah Department of Health Data Include Homicides and Related Suicides

(Salt Lake City, UT) – 2005 was a deadly year for some Utahns involved in domestic violence (DV). According to a new Utah Department of Health (UDOH) report, 21 men and women died at the hands of intimate partners, friends or family members, and 44 men and women committed suicide in the wake of a domestic violence incident.

“In 2005, the Utah Department of Health began looking at domestic violence cases in a different light,” said Teresa Brechlin, Intentional Injury Prevention Coordinator for the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program (VIPP). “We began collecting data under the new National Violent Death Reporting System and uncovered this epidemic of DV-related suicide,” she said.

A suicide is considered domestic violence-related if one of the circumstances surrounding the suicide involved violence or the threat of violence between intimate partners, family members, or roommates. Of the 44 suspects who committed suicide, 42 (95%) were male and two were female. In addition, 41 percent were substance abusers, 29 percent had a recent criminal legal problem and 24 percent had mental health problems. Sixty-four percent of suicides were by firearm, 29 percent were hanging and 7 percent were poisonings.

Of the 21 homicide victims, 10 were male and 11 were female. Homicide rates were highest among the 18-34 age group and significantly higher among Utahns of Hispanic/Latino descent for both victims and suspects.



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All of the homicide suspects were male and more than half (52%) used a firearm in the killing. Twenty percent used a sharp object, 12 percent used personal weapons (hands, etc.), and eight percent used a blunt object. In three of the incidents, multiple weapons were used.

Regarding the relationship of the suspect to the victim, many Utahns believe domestic violence always involves intimate partners. But in 2005, just 42 percent of suspects were intimately involved with the victims, while 33 percent were other family members and 25 percent were acquaintances, like friends or roommates.

The circumstances surrounding the homicides were varied and included lovers' triangles, arguments over money or property, mercy killing and mental illness. In some instances, the victim was killed trying to intervene on behalf of another person.

“The report shows us that domestic violence is far-reaching and affects more Utahns than the public realizes,” said Brechlin. “All those who die in domestic violence incidents, whether by their own hand or someone else, leave behind family and friends who have to cope with the devastation,” she added.

For more information, please contact Cyndi Bemis at (801) 538-6348 or 801-550-4228.

For a copy of the report, please go to <http://health.utah.gov/vipp>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.